

## Grade 5 - Narrative

### A Cornhusking Bee

Josiah Bennett dropped three ears of corn into the wicker basket at his feet. Slipping his left suspender back on his shoulder, he hoisted the basket onto his hip and walked to the end of the row where he was working.

This was the first year he was old enough to pick corn instead of playing. It was also the first year and the first corn crop of the new century—1900.

Josiah's father and the other laborers around him talked about the exciting possibilities of the new century. Someday, every house in or around North Platte might have a telephone and, difficult as it was to imagine, indoor plumbing.

Today, nothing seemed different to Josiah. His family's friends and neighbors were gathered for a cornhusking bee, just as they did every year in August.

"Put that corn on the smaller pile," his younger sister, Hannah, instructed him, pointing to one of the two heaps that were accumulating in the shadow of the barn.

Even though Hannah was younger, Josiah felt she was always trying to tell him what to do, so he dumped his corn on the bigger pile.

"Didn't you hear me?" Hannah asked.

"Yes, I heard you, but this pile is closer and I'm tired. You haven't been out in the field all day."

"Maybe not," Hannah replied in an irritated tone, "but I have been helping Mother get supper ready for all these people. We even made two special pies for those who get a red ear of corn." She wiped the perspiration off her forehead. "It's hot in the kitchen, and I would rather be out in the corn field anyway."

Josiah understood what Hannah was saying. He was accustomed to seeing Hannah in overalls like his and playing rather than working.

Josiah's father and several others came out of the field leading the mule, which was pulling a wagon full of ears of corn. The ears of corn were divided and then dumped on one of the piles.

"That is the last of the corn from the field," Josiah's father announced, dusting off his overalls.

Father's announcement meant it was time to divide into two teams to husk the corn. Josiah's father chose two captains, since the farm was his. These two captains

then took turns selecting others to be on their team. The team that finished husking its pile of corn first would win a prize.

The real prize was finding a red ear of corn. Red corn was grown in a small section of the field. One ear of red corn was buried in each pile. All of the corn looked identical until the husks were pulled back to reveal the red kernels.

Josiah knew he couldn't husk as many ears of corn as the others who were older, but maybe he would be lucky enough to find a red ear of corn.

He grabbed the first ear of corn in his left hand, separated the husks and silks at the top, and pulled half of them down. Turning the ear quickly, he grabbed the remaining silks and husks and tugged them down. Then he broke the husks and silks off at the base. The husked ears of corn were placed in the wicker baskets that were used earlier.

The sun was beginning to set, and the air was becoming cooler. The cooler air was refreshing to those husking the corn and renewed their energy.

Josiah gasped as he pulled the silks and husks down on one ear of corn.

The man next to him cried, "The boy has found the red ear!"

Later after both piles of corn were completely husked, Josiah sat in the swing behind his house. The back door creaked open and Hannah came down the steps with her hands behind her back. She stopped in front of Josiah and brought one hand from behind her.

"Here's your pie," she said. "It's cherry. That's your favorite, isn't it?"

"Sure is, and it looks delicious," said Josiah. "What do you have in your other hand?"

Hannah showed Josiah two forks and napkins. "I'm hoping we can share the swing while eating the pie together."